

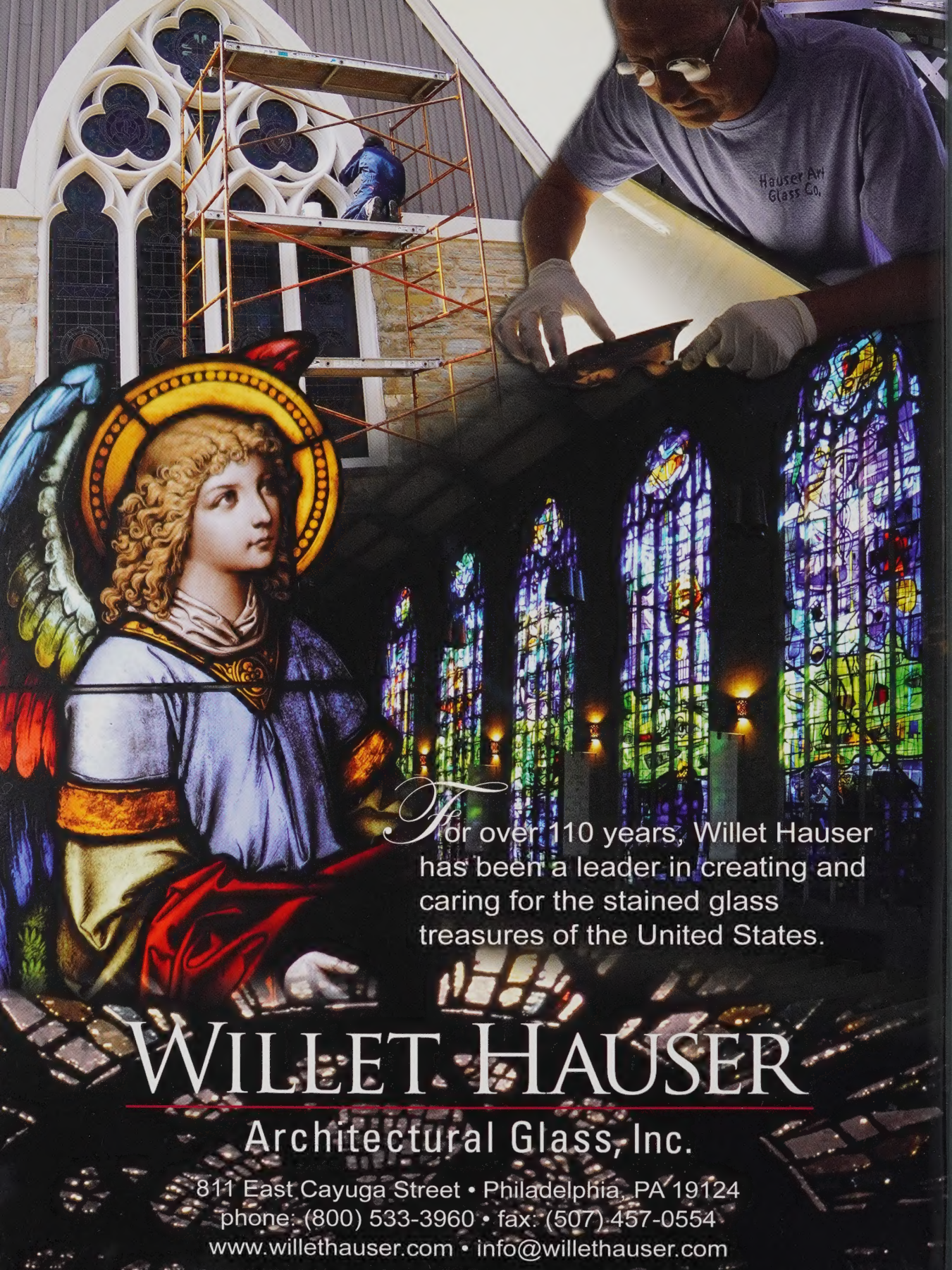


# FAITH & FORM

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Michael J. Crosbie, Ph.D., FAIA  
47 Grandview Terrace  
Essex, CT 06426  
860-575-4702 cell  
mcrosbie@faithandform.com

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Detail of the Mohamed Al-Amine Mosque in Beirut, Lebanon, decorated by Light Establishment and completed in 2007 (article begins on page 13).

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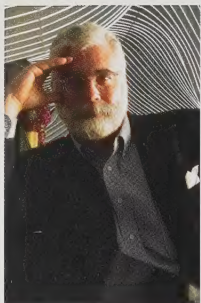
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Religious Art and  
Architecture.







## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSBIE

I recently read the novel *Catholics*, written by the late Irish-American writer Brian Moore, and published in 1972. The book was made into a TV-movie a year later. Very short, barely 100 pages, its premise is a confrontation between the Catholic Church and a community of monks on a small island off the coast of Ireland toward the end of the 20th

century. The Church has gone through Vatican III and IV, and is deep in transformation through ecumenism with other world religions. In the process, the Church has abolished private confession, along with the belief in transubstantiation: the changing of bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ. The Catholic mass is now a symbolic act, no longer a miracle.


A small band of monks from Muck Island are not following the rules. They have been going to the mainland to say Latin Mass and hear private confession. Their actions have attracted the attention of the BBC, and now hundreds of pilgrims are coming to their Latin Mass from the world over. A young American priest, James Kinsella, has been sent by Rome to confront the Abbot and to bring him and his monks into line.

What struck me about the story is how the main themes of defying authority, defining orthodoxy, and applying pressure to conform have not changed in the more than 40 years since Moore wrote the book. There are many other issues at play: the power of prayer, the fragility of belief, the role of faith, and the relationship of the congregant to the

clergy. Can we look at any religion today and not find debate and conflict along these lines? The longevity of such questions within organized religion prompts other questions: Is this actually the "default" state of religious institutions? Do we delude ourselves in thinking that religious belief has ever been or will ever be "settled"? Is the very idea of religious consensus or conformity merely human hubris on a grand scale?

At the height of the exchange between Kinsella and the Abbot, the visiting priest asks why the monks didn't follow orders and stop saying Latin Mass. The Abbot explains that they at first did change; but the men stopped coming to mass, and instead would stand talking and smoking outside church, waiting for their families, while others stopped coming all together. The Abbot expressed his concern to his superior and was told that the new mass was popular everywhere else.


On this, the Abbot reflects: "I said to myself, maybe the people here are different from the people in other places, maybe they will not stand for this change. After all, what are we doing, playing at being Sunday priests over there on the mainland, if it's not trying to keep the people's faith in Almighty God? I am not a holy man, but, maybe because I am not, I felt I had no right to interfere. I thought it was my duty, not to disturb the faith they have. So, I went back to the old way."

The Abbot's sense of his own limitations in the presence of the faith of others grows from his own self-doubt. We learn that for years he has suffered from his own crisis of faith. This has made him all the more sensitive to the delicate nature of belief in others, and how it might be broken. It might also have made him, paradoxically, a better priest. 

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT [MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM](mailto:MCROSBIE@FAITHANDFORM.COM)

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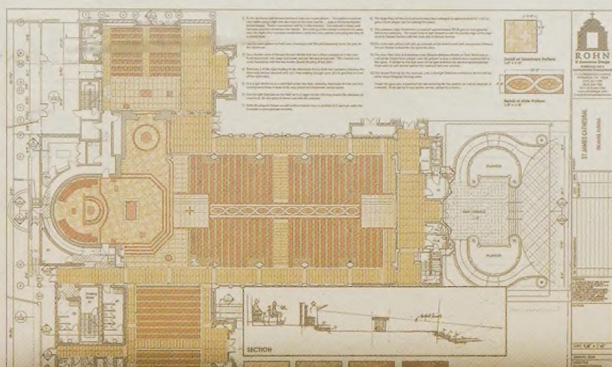
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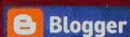
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# Integrated Project Delivery for Worship Spaces

By Phillip G. Bernstein, FAIA

*Brunelleschi's dome dominates the city of Florence.*

In the summer of 1418 the Opera del Duomo, (Office of the Works of the Cathedral) announced a competition to design and build the final component of Santa Maria del Fiori, the central cathedral in Florence. The project, which had begun in 1296, was still under construction, and, like many building projects to this day, was in trouble. Here's the situation as described by author Ross King in his *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Invented Architecture*<sup>1</sup>:

The way forward should have been clear enough. For the past fifty years, the south aisle of the unfinished cathedral had housed a thirty-foot-long scale model of the structure, in effect an artist's impression of what the cathedral should look like when finished. The problem was that the model included an enormous dome—a dome that, if built, would be the highest and widest vault ever raised. And for fifty years it had been obvious that no one in Florence—or anywhere in Italy for that matter—had any clear idea how to construct it. The unbuilt dome of Santa Maria del Fiore had therefore become the greatest architectural puzzle of the age. Many experts considered its erection an impossible feat. Even the original planners of the dome had been unable to advise how their project might be completed; they merely expressed a touching faith that at some point in the future God might provide a solution, and architects with a more advanced knowledge would be found.

**"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."**

*Psalm 127:1*

Filippo Brunelleschi, a goldsmith and mechanical genius who grew up, according to King, a short walk from the project site, would win the competition for the dome project by proposing a "double-dome" solution that required no scaffolding and would otherwise allow the cathedral to operate during construction. "Pippo" Brunelleschi became the epitome of what was to be known as a "Master Builder," someone who combined deep knowledge of design and construction and who controlled every aspect of the making of a building. Pippo was said to have made every critical decision related to the dome project: designing the boats that carried stone from the quarries, directing every manner of stone carver and laborer, and fiercely protecting the information that was the basis of his approach. According to legend, Pippo would carve a quick study model of an idea from a radish, and after showing the model to the workers, eat the radish to leave no trace for further reference<sup>2</sup>. A subsequent clarification would have to come from the mouth of the master builder himself.

Six hundred years of building later, projects are, in many ways, no less complex than the challenge so artfully solved by Brunelleschi. If he was responsible, as King asserts, for the emergence of "architecture" from "building"

he was as a master builder both architect and contractor. In the modern age these roles have diverged widely as the background, training, and responsibilities of the architect and the builder have become distinct, separate, and in many ways incompatible. A modern construction insurance carrier, for example, would be mortified by Pippo's design approach predicated on a construction strategy—to build the dome without scaffolding—and would admonish him that such an idea was considered "the means and methods of construction" and was strictly the responsibility of the contractor. And rather than radishes, Pippo would today produce hundreds if not thousands of drawings that would instruct the builder how the dome was to be when complete, its "design intent," leaving the details of material selection, construction sequence, even the creation of very detailed assembly instructions (shop drawings) to the building team. Even with that pile of drawings, Pippo's contractor would issue many, many questions and carefully track each one as a measure of the incompleteness of his documentation.

The construction market itself is hardly served well by the isolated roles of designers and builders. More than a third of all projects miss either budget or schedule targets<sup>3</sup> and the productivity of modern construction efforts is considered, at best, to be about 65 percent. So in addition to highly unpredictable outcomes, as much as 35 cents on a dollar spent on construction is wasted in inefficient construction

PHIL BERNSTEIN IS A VICE PRESIDENT AT AUTODESK AND TEACHES AT THE YALE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE. HE CAN BE REACHED AT [PHIL.BERNSTEIN@AUTODESK.COM](mailto:PHIL.BERNSTEIN@AUTODESK.COM).

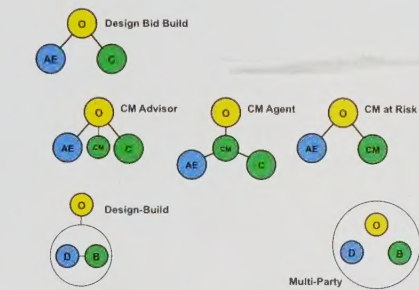


methods, badly created or coordinated drawings, material waste on a job site, errors and omissions during design and construction, and time spent creating exculpatory documentation in case the project ends up in court. A 2004 *Construction Users' Roundtable (CURT)* report on the state of the industry concluded: "... the difficulties experienced in typical construction projects... are artifacts of a construction process fraught by lack of cooperation and poor information integration. The goal of everyone in the industry should be better, faster, more capable project delivery created by fully integrated, collaborative teams."<sup>4</sup>

So any institution that chooses to build today faces the resulting challenges of largely uncooperative, unproductive processes making the risks great and the rewards doubtful. And an organization without an established Opera del Duomo—in-house building expertise—may be especially buffeted by these winds.

Modern construction is too complex to return to the days of the Master Builder, and the specific roles of designer and constructor are likely here to stay. But since the 1970s a variety of delivery configurations has evolved in an attempt to address the challenges of building, ranging from what was once called "traditional" or "design-bid-build" through assorted construction management modes, to design-build. Each of these approaches relies on, to varying degrees, a foundational principle of construction: lowest first cost, or "award to the lowest bidder." In fact, much of the construction industry relies on lowest first cost decision-making—the rule by which design contracts are selected, and contractors and sub-contractors chosen—despite the evidence described above that indicates far less than optimal results. Design and construction are thus heavily commoditized, resulting in fierce competition for limited work, very low profit margins, unstable business conditions, and imbedded attitudes that prioritize individual self-interest over the good of the project. Hardly the cooperative, integrated nirvana called for by CURT.

In concert with the development and adoption of advanced computer modeling techniques known as building information modeling (BIM), a new generation of delivery approaches is emerging that at least reaches for better days. Known generally as integrated project delivery (IPD), these models challenge the traditional structures and the roles of owners, designers, and builders by asserting that deep alignment of all the participants with the overall goals of the project itself yields the best result. Abandoning lowest bidder selection, IPD projects are based on the following principles:



Various delivery structures used in US construction.



Building Information Modeling in Revit.

Photo: YSU/94/flickr

**Early substantive involvement of key participants:** The project team is selected in concert, with client, designers and builders joined together as a collaborative unit. Designers, builders, and client work together from the outset of the project to set its objectives, agree on measurable outcomes, and determine a plan to accomplish the work before the design itself is begun. This is in direct contrast to more typical arrangements where the builder's first exposure to a project is when he/she sees the final design drawings during the bidding process. Having formulated the project's most important goals together, a team can work more closely to accomplish them.

**Joint sharing of risk and reward:** Project goals are established prior to the onset of design by the collaborative decision making of all the parties, and then the team is rewarded jointly for accomplishing those goals. Risks are assumed and managed collaboratively without assignment; a success by one party in the project is considered a success for all, and similarly, failures are jointly held. This "one for all and all for one" attitude means that all resources are applied to progress the project by all parties, rather than simply to advance a single project component (like design or construction). Each project goal established is assigned a profit payment, which is provided jointly to the designers and builders collectively after that goal is reached.

**Joint project management:** Decision making on the project is by consensus of the key players, owner, architect/engineers, and builders. No important decision can be made without that consensus. In the event of a non-decision, more senior leaders from the participating organizations are available as a "board of appeal."

**Litigation eliminated:** The owner, designers, and builders agree that, save gross negligence on the part of any party, there will be no project-related litigation. Since approximately 85 percent of all claims against architects come from owners or builders, this is a powerful incentive toward performance. Owners who provide this indemnification do so from the belief that litigation is the least efficient and least useful enforcement mechanism toward project success. The resulting atmosphere of trust allows each participant the freedom to address and solve problems without the traditional strictures of canonical roles, and in the knowledge that the most important thing is to solve a problem, not assign blame for it.

IPD is designed to allow everyone on a project to find the best idea, and for the team to implement that idea, irrespective of the source of that idea. The project itself creates an internal logic and process that is not overwhelmed by the typical contentions of construction, and behaviors change accordingly. The differences are compared in the following table:

Characteristic	Classic Models	IPD Models
Decision Making	Propose/dispose	Consensus
Risk Allocation	Least able to avoid	Best able to manage, shared
Reward Structure	Protect fixed price	Accomplish project goals
Outcome Focus	Protect self-interest	Maximize project outcome
Deliverable focus	Least effort	Best result
Team Behavior	Self, then project	Project - self

The contractual basis of an IPD project is equally radical consisting essentially of a single cooperation agreement signed jointly by the owner, architect, and builder. That contract sets out the objectives of the project, various procedural aspects of how it will progress, and the terms of incentive-aligned payments. There are several model agreements in use in the market today, including those by the American Institute of Architects, the Association of General Contractors, and bespoke documents by construction attorneys with expertise in IPD approaches. But contract models are not the essence of IPD in theory or in practice.




IPD methods have been developed in the service of collaboration and integrative team-based work where project participants align their interests with those of the project itself rather than first protecting their (margin-starved) piece of the pie. The players operate, in essence, in a non-heroic mode, taking on traditional responsibilities in general but participating fully in all aspects of the execution of the project. There is no longer a need for Pippo's radishes, as information is organized clearly through digital models and is shared across the enterprise. Design and construction data—including the total cost of all the work—are conducted open-book and in the spirit of absolute transparency. All aspects of the project are arrayed in the service of the project and not of its participants, but the interests of the participants are served nonetheless. The more successful the project, the more successful its contributors.

According to experienced IPD implementers<sup>5</sup>, more than 50 such IPD projects are under way in the US, and they are showing results. Early analysis of project data suggests that IPD projects have dramatically fewer change orders, schedules that often finish early, higher delivered project value when funds saved are reinvested in project enhancements, and higher sustainable performance from a full lifecycle view of the job. My own IPD project, a headquarters office for a division of our company, was completed in eight months within budget, achieved LEED Platinum, and has won numerous design awards.

There would seem to be a natural alignment between IPD methods and the appropriate collaborative tone and stance of the design of worship spaces, where collective will serves the interest of the larger good. But religious design projects are often undertaken by organizations with little or no building experience, and certainly without the services of the Opera del Duomo. This is probably the single greatest inhibitor to IPD on such projects, since collaborative decision making by the client, designers, and builders requires some sophistication on the part of all parties but particularly by the client itself. Congregations that include experienced building professionals could empower those folks to represent them on an IPD project, but they won't be successful unless the designated representative has the ability to make decisions, real-time, on behalf of his or her constituents. Delegated, partial decision making is the old-school model and inhibits the flow of an IPD project.

And if this model seems too radical to attempt, there are other options that partially engage principles of IPD without full implementation. These IPD-like delivery models use traditional contract structures like design-bid-build or construction management with integrative overlays that establish shared goals and profit incentives, data exchange cooperation agreements, and other places where increased cooperation between the parties coupled with appropriate risk/reward provisions can smooth the way.

The challenges of construction and its typical un-pleasantries stand in stark contrast with the loftier goals of building places of worship. Organizing these projects with a view toward cooperation and in the belief that the best ideas are out there, waiting to be discovered, may pave a smoother path accordingly. 

#### NOTES

1. From *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Invented Architecture* by Ross King (Penguin Books, 2000), p. 3.
2. As explained by architectural historian Mario Carpo during his lecture at Yale's "Is Drawing Dead" Symposium, February, 2013.
3. According to the Construction Management Association of America's Owner's Survey, 2005.
4. See CURT (Construction Users Roundtable) Whitepaper 1202 "Collaboration, Integrated Information and the Project Lifecycle in Building Design, Construction and Operation," Self-published, 2004.
5. Attorney Howard Ashcraft has helped organize many of these projects, and reports these results from his clients.

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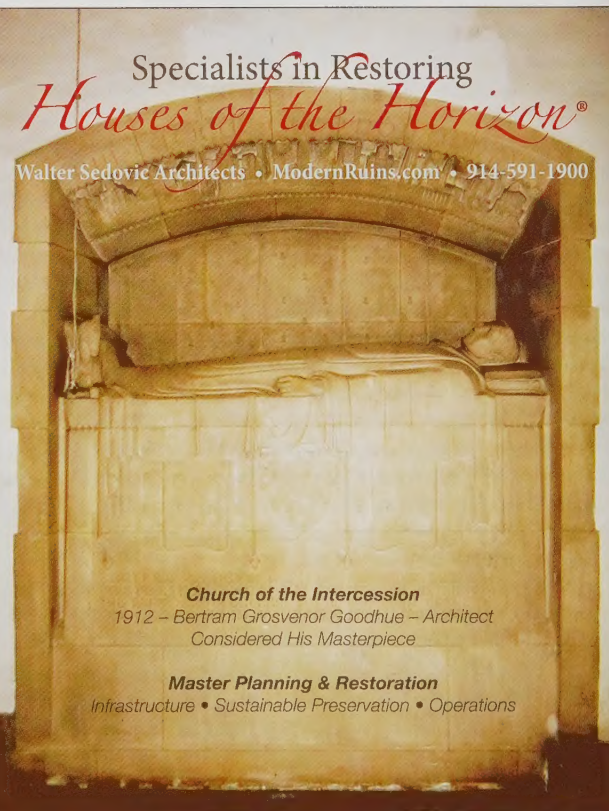
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# The Work of the Building Committee

By Rev. W. Joseph Mann

It was late Sunday afternoon, and a dozen members of our church had gathered in the choir stalls for a brief period of worship before discussing the church's building needs. Gathered in the choir loft was a pretty remarkable collection of folks, among them an educator who had headed state-government agencies, a CEO of a local company, a prominent lawyer, lifelong members of this church, and a young woman who wanted the church to continue to reach out to the next generation. The meeting would sometimes get pretty far afield in terms of topics, but in the end, work had been done to give direction for next steps for the church's ministry and capital needs.

I left this Long Range Study Committee with the realization that for nearly all of my professional life I had been attending these meetings. Such work either helps me with St. Peter at the Pearly Gates or assigns me to one of Dante's rings in the other place. I worked for 20 years in North Carolina at The Duke Endowment, assisting beneficiary churches with grants for both outreach and capital programs. Almost all these grants required me to meet with officially church-appointed groups or committees. Usually I was meeting with the building committee, and I learned a few things about these committees that I believe is worth sharing. I invite your observations and learning to contribute to a discussion of these important vehicles for congregational life. Artists, architects, liturgical designers, technical consultants, and clergy all must work with and through these committees to accomplish good design.

Perhaps the first thing to be said about building committees is that they vary among religious groups and denominations. Just when you think you have figured out how these committees function, you discover that although there may be some general trends and tendencies, each committee has a life of its own. To work with a building committee means learning who they are and what work they want to do; it is not safe to make too many assumptions.


Good work also means knowing the polity of the religious community with which you are working. This polity will help you know who is in charge and where decisions are made. In some polities the local congregation has authority to make all decisions, but in others bishops and other denominational officials and committees have either the right of input or the authority to approve plans. It can, of course, be most confusing for you as a professional working with the building committee if you find that the final authority is perhaps not even in the room!

Having said that it is difficult to generalize, I want to talk about some themes and realities I have encountered. First, most building committees understand their work as deeply spiritual. They understand that they "are building for the Lord." Committee members want to honor the spiritual leadership of their heirs in the faith, and they understand that this new building work needs to be an offering to God. So building committee meetings usually begin with prayer or devotional. There is often reflection on what a building idea has to do with the nature and mission of the faith community. There is a desire to honor the past as the committee casts a vision for the future. And in all this work, the committee seeks to be led by God. I know that sometimes congregational committees act a bit more like secular agencies in their approach to building, but most see the building process as part of the religious life of the community.

Second, it can be very difficult to determine, "Who is in charge here?" You do this by asking questions and observing how decisions are made. Is the one in charge the clergy leader of the congregation, the chair of the building committee, the bishop or denominational head? There may also be a stakeholder not in the room who has the most important word about this work. I have known congregations who had official working committees, but the real work was done outside in the parking lot after the official meeting. I have been in meetings with the clergy as the real leader and driver, and I have been in other meetings when the clergy was not even (or ever!) present. You may also be working in an atmosphere where decisions are made not by a vote but by gaining a consensus. Finding ways to honor everyone's deep wishes is of course a great challenge, but such a consensus challenge may lead to really good work.

Third, as someone trying to help this committee do its work, you will need to attend to the needs of the committee members. I have learned over the years that a logical agenda is necessary for a meeting to get down to good work, but I must also pay attention to the personal needs and concerns of the committee members. Sometimes these concerns are met in the prayer or devotional time. Committee members are asked to voice personal concerns or celebrations and to make prayer requests. If such personal and spiritual issues do not surface, they often get attention during the business or work session, likely disrupting the agenda and the work you want to get accomplished.

Fourth, you often need to educate. I have seldom worked with a building committee that had much of a history; this was usually the first time they had been part of the building process. So an architect or a liturgical consultant likely needs to help the committee understand the architect's or the designer's role and value added. I have also often encountered great mistrust of anyone who is outside the faith community. Building trust by listening and by helping the building committee articulate its vision and talk honestly about its hopes and fears is of course crucial. Fifth, use the resources of IFRAA and *Faith & Form* magazine to help you and the congregation to see its place in a broader context. Seeing and visiting other religious facilities can also help a congregation visualize what they want.

Building committees have the opportunity to contribute to the spiritual growth and vitality of a faith community. They can be conflicted and can represent the dysfunctions of a congregation. They can also exhibit the wonder of a faith community honoring its rich past and forging a future. In all this they honor a transcendent power that uses the fragile lives of real people to accomplish something significant. As professionals we are honored to be part of these communities, even for a short period of time. Enjoy the opportunity to work with a building committee. And when you do, know that I am praying for you. 

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THE AUTHOR IS AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF PARISH WORK AT DUKE DIVINITY SCHOOL. FOR 20 YEARS HE WAS A DIRECTOR AT THE DUKE ENDOWMENT, ASSISTING UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES WITH BUILDING GRANTS. HE IS FORMER BOARD CHAIR OF *FAITH & FORM* MAGAZINE AND OF THE INTERFAITH FORUM ON RELIGION, ART AND ARCHITECTURE. HE IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE ELBERT M. CONOVER MEMORIAL AWARD FROM IFRAA AND AIA.



# A Shared Process of Creation

BY BEN HEIMSATH, AIA



*Design workshops for both the original church and a later addition enfranchised congregation members in the design process.*

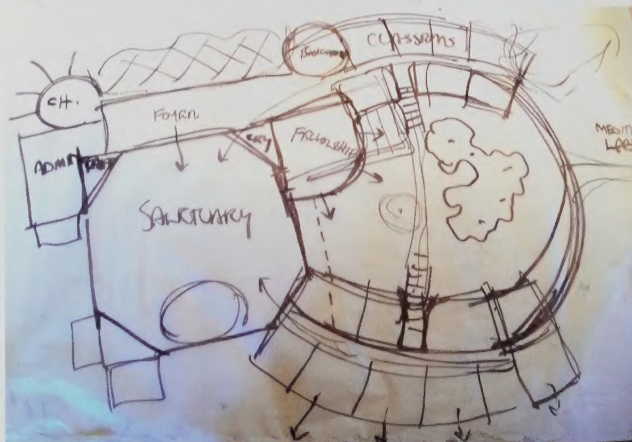
CAN WE DETERMINE WHETHER A NEW OR RENOVATED ENVIRONMENT built for prayer or worship will convey a sense of spirituality? I believe we can if a congregation or worshipping community has a highly engaged process whereby this fundamental goal is shared equally by the architects and the community. In more than 30 years of work with faith groups from many diverse backgrounds and denominations, our firm has developed a process for design and project implementation based on our belief that groups can find spirituality as they share in the creative design process.

This highly interactive process includes the collaborative session that we call a Design Retreat Workshop. We utilize many established community design principles whereby people are actively engaged in various stages of the design process.<sup>1</sup> Held in a neutral setting, the Design Retreat Workshop includes components of both a leadership forum and a problem-solving charette. However, unlike these traditional formats, the event is compressed into one day, and the architects and congregation leaders participate equally in generating design ideas. The overall problem is generally defined and typically includes a range of facilities issues and program needs. The goal for the session is simple: everyone present must feel that the group, in the end, has developed one solution that is the “best.” A major advantage of the early contributions made by congregation leaders is that the creative interaction continues throughout the rest of the design and building

implementation process. Many significant contributions come from ideas generated by or refined from this early session.

In his book, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, journalist James Surowiecki explores the extensive economic and sociological research documenting numerous ways that groups of people, large and small, outperform even the most talented individuals in predicting and problem solving.<sup>2</sup> Surowiecki however, offers little insight into the reason this happens.

*Designs slowly evolve in a process that records the input of congregation members.*



THE AUTHOR IS A PRINCIPAL OF HEIMSATH ARCHITECTS IN AUSTIN, TEXAS, AND CAN BE REACHED AT: CBH@HEIMSATH.COM.



When individuals gather together and find a connection or a common purpose, the experience can become so tangible that it may be felt or expressed as an actual presence in the group. In the course of many of our Design Retreat Workshops, this energy has been

called many things: the "Holy Spirit," "God's Presence," or a similar expression appropriate to the various religious traditions that have participated. These creative design experiences seem to embody the genius of communal worship. Each experience is

remarkably similar, regardless of what it is called.

#### UNITY CHURCH OF THE HILLS

A case study of the Unity Church of the Hills in Austin, Texas, illustrates the process with the creation of a successful spirit-filled environment. This project involved the relocation of the church to a new, undeveloped site. The process for Unity's design and implementation typifies our approach to working with congregations, and provides an opportunity for commentary.

In 1999 two dozen congregation leaders assembled at a local restaurant reserved for the Design Retreat Workshop. Structured discussions focused on what made the two-and-a-half-year-old ministry special. Participants assessed information from a previous small group tour of the existing facilities that helped to generate priorities for the new 14-acre site. The morning exchanges helped to identify the spirit that members felt within the congregation. While many groups describe this spirit through stories of their history, the Unity Church group stressed the connections members already had made with the undeveloped property. One participant shared his revelation when he saw the seller's name, Guthrie O'Donnell, abbreviated as "G O'D" on the subdivision documents. Nearly everyone described a feeling of peacefulness under the canopy of trees even though buildings surrounded the property on all sides.

In the afternoon session, the architects explained that the group should consider itself the authors of the final design. The architects noted that they would be refining the concept, but the basic plan would emerge from this retreat. The Unity participants were separated into brainstorming groups and asked to work with one of the architects to imagine as many solutions as possible. Each group was assigned a blank site plan and a set of scaled templates representing potential program spaces. As the brainstorming wrapped up, 11 sketches adorned the walls.

Participants took a break and then reassembled to hear each sketch explained by the member who had drawn it. A straw poll was taken to focus the remaining conversations on those solutions most favored by the participants.

Two preferred plans located buildings in the same clearing near the center of the site. They both featured circular plans for the sanctuary. The architects explained that the circle is associated with sacred geometries, and that Renaissance builders saw the circle as a perfect form. The ministers noted that the circle is a

*A finished presentation plan is worked out using the sketches developed during workshops, pulling a variety of ideas together.*



*Exterior view of the entry to the completed design and construction of Unity Church of the Hills.*



powerful symbol in the Unity theology. One plan showed a large entry arch over the narrow drive connecting to the main commercial street. The other featured a masonry wall that parted to emphasize the transition from the parking area to the interior of the site.

The architects suggested ways to merge the two solutions. The entry arch and the parted stone wall could both be used to create a path symbolic of the spiritual journey towards worship. The building placement and the circular sanctuary shown on both plans could become an octagonal plan. The architects noted that saving trees was a consensus priority of nearly all the solutions. They re-sketches a synthesis plan and included the small circular chapel at one end of the entry wall.

The session ended with an affirmation by each participant that the group had developed an inspired design for the property. The ministers, in their closing prayer, cited Unity teaching in describing the powerful goodness of God that had been present in the day's proceedings. The plan sketch from the Design Retreat Workshop closely resembles the completed building, featuring an octagonal sanctuary that stands on the site today. The collaborative process continued to produce fruitful results. Only four trees were removed to accommodate the parking, drives, and building. The entry arch concept violated numerous codes, but variances were approved unanimously by city agencies.

Several years after the dedication, the architects updated the plan to accommodate the congregation's growth. One very interesting additional concern was expressed by congregation members who wanted to be sure there was no loss or damage to the great feeling of spirituality that exists in the original building and on the property. Utilizing the same collaborative process, the updated plan led to a successful addition; the congregation added classrooms and an outdoor fellowship pavilion, raising sufficient funds in spite of the economic downturn.

#### SHARING THE SPIRIT


Most architects are not trained to share the design process with groups. They often see creativity as an individual effort that is only compromised by outside participation. This approach can cause strained relationships, particularly when the client is a church or a spiritual community. This unwillingness to share seems particularly incongruous, considering how many architects equate the creative spark with divinity, even suggesting the process of design creativity as a metaphor for understanding God.<sup>1</sup>

Theologically, most contemporary denominations don't believe their buildings contain God. Rather, they share some form of the belief that God is present when "two or more are gathered in God's name." As the Unity process illustrates, something special also happens when people gather to design in God's name. The sense of spirituality so greatly appreciated by the congregation today has its roots in the spirituality experienced by its members as they engaged in the process of creating it. [6]

#### NOTES

1. Henry Sanoff, *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).
2. James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Anchor, 2004). Surowiecki doesn't include the activities of planners and architects in the growing field of community involvement in design, though conceptually, it raises the same issue. Evaluation of design quality may be subjective, but specific criteria, such as the satisfaction of the users of the completed building, could be used.
3. Michael Benedikt, *God, Creativity, and Evolution* (Austin: Centerline Books, University of Texas at Austin, 2008), pp. 38-39, 42-54. Benedikt continues in his writing to offer an intriguing argument for a definition of God based on the creative designer metaphor. This reference, however, is made only to demonstrate the connections historically that architects have made between the divine and creativity.

*Timeless Interiors  
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Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle, Jackson, MS


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# The Great Art Commission

By Annie Dixon

COMMISSIONING AN ORIGINAL WORK OF ART for a religious community can be a faith-filled journey resulting in an important and meaningful acquisition. The process can help to define values and priorities, manifesting them in a physical representation that will be treasured as a legacy by future generations. But how does a faith community begin and navigate the journey that is, necessarily, to an unknown destination? It begins, as do all great expeditions, with long discussions and careful planning.

## SOUL FOOD

Why should a faith community spend any of its time or treasure on art? Why not simply gather for worship in a simple building and spend the surplus budget on a soup kitchen and other good works? Well, great design and works of art can nourish the soul and offer a glimpse of the glorious. When we create, we emulate and honor God, acknowledging and appreciating the value of the beauty of his creation. Although there are denominations that shun certain forms of artwork, all religious communities make design decisions: architecture, interior layout, colors, decoration (or lack thereof), and proportions all make a statement about their faith and their style of worship.

If religion teaches us that each soul is precious and unique and yearns for something beyond ourselves and our daily existence, what better way to convey this message, to convert nonbelievers and to sustain believers, than for a faith community to lift up the beautiful and the unique in contrast to the prosaic and the everyday? There are neighborhoods, whether impoverished or simply uninspired, where the churches and temples are the only place where congregants will experience true art, noble materials, and beautifully designed and crafted works. Houses of worship can be the galleries for the soul, the creative in the midst of the commercialized, the meticulously crafted juxtaposed to the mass produced. The ways in which a denomination, a parish, or a congregation discusses these concepts begins the journey to commissioning an appropriate and enduring work of art for its worship space.

## FUNCTION AND FORM

Having determined that artwork would be beneficial in a religious environment, the



Textile artist Paul Woodrum's jump started his Challwood Studio with a commission for *The Right Reverend Barbara Harris*, the first female bishop in the Anglican Communion.

next step is to determine its purpose. Should it be invitational, welcoming, awe inspiring, devotional, meditative, mood setting? How about permanent or seasonal? A focal point or a backdrop? The answers to these questions will provide guidance for determining proper location, size, and finish of the piece: exterior or interior; diminutive, life size, or monumental; monotone, muted, full color, or gilded. Likewise, various options for material and installation will be considered or eliminated: bronze, fiberglass, plaster, wood, stone, glass, tiles, textiles, metals, etc.; stationary or moveable, eye level or elevated; spotlighted or backlit, and a host of other possibilities.

## CONSULTANTS AND COMMITTEES

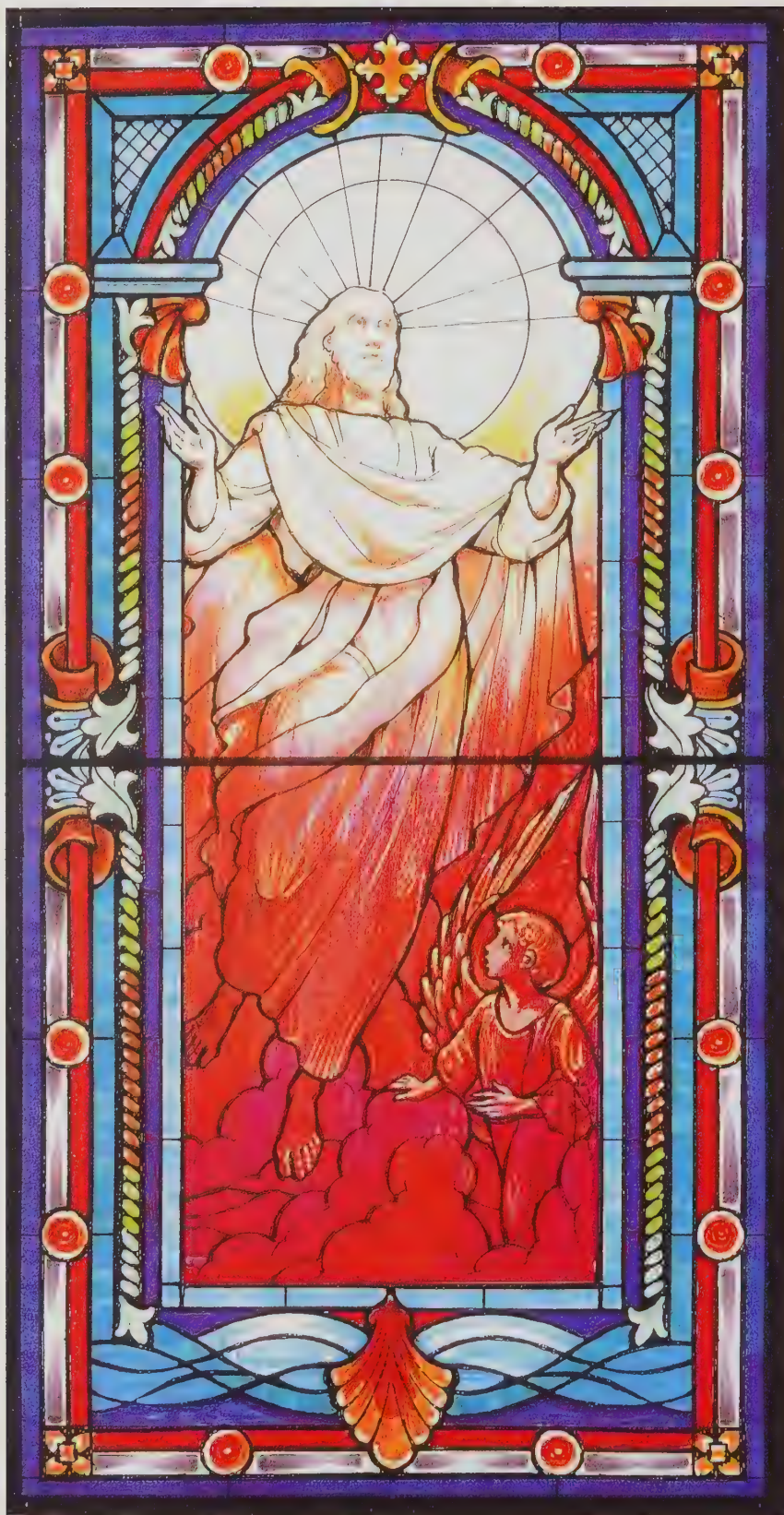
Once a need has been determined and a desire to meet it with a unique artistic solution is to be considered, it is time to call in the professionals. And the volunteers. Today it is rare, if anachronistic, for clergy or patron to direct



'*Christ the High Priest*' icon by artist Marek Czamecki.

ANNIE DIXON IS THE OWNER AND PROJECT MANAGER AT DIXON STUDIO, A VIRGINIA-BASED LITURGICAL ARTS STUDIO. SHE IS A LICENSED CLASS A CONTRACTOR AND AN EDITORIAL ADVISOR TO FAITH & FORM.





*Ascension stained glass window by artist Ronald Neill Dixon.*

an ecclesiastical art project alone. The services of professionals and the input of members of the congregation provide insurance against the hiring of amateurs and the creation of shrines to personal tastes.

Although generally not skilled in the hands-on application of the fine arts and crafts themselves, architects and liturgical consultants can be a tremendous resource for understanding materials, processes, and proportion, as well as how to integrate art and decoration into the environment and the liturgy. Just as important as their knowledge of products is their familiarity with producers: they have built networks of artisans whose skill and professionalism they have vetted, assuring quality and reliability. Finally, if an art commission is part of a larger construction or renovation project, the architect or design consultant should bring the ability—and be given the authority—to weave together the schedules for contractors and artisans so that all elements of the project are coordinated and installed in a logical and timely fashion.

While clergy and the professionals bring necessary education and experience to the project, they must never forget that they are being paid to be stewards of the faithful's donations. Not only are the members of the flock asked to contribute their money to the cause, some are called to donate their time and expertise as well. After the professionals have moved on to their next commissions and assignments, these volunteers and their families and neighbors are the end users of the completed project. Thus, the volunteer committee plays an important role in the process.

Ironically, faith communities may differ greatly from one another in their theology, but they tend to establish remarkably similar committees regarding the art and architecture of their worship facilities. Availability will dictate that a majority of committee members will be retired; practicality will draw people from related backgrounds in construction, interior design, religious education, fundraising; passion will motivate a few unlikely volunteers who will bring an extra layer of perspective and personality to the process. And somehow, these disparate individuals become a cohesive group that is a microcosm of the congregation with its best interests at heart, and manage (in spite of some minor bickering) to find and commission an artist to create something lovely and lasting.



*Designer and decorative painter Harout Bastajian of Light Establishment works on the decoration of a dome at the Al-Shoker Mosque in Tripoli.*

FINDING YOUR ARTIST

Many factors have contributed to fewer artists working in the religious field: the closure and consolidation of traditional and mainline churches, the growth of austere megachurches, increased options for commercial and residential applications of architectural and decorative arts, the lure of better-paying and cleaner computer artwork as opposed to hands-on crafts. So, where are the remaining liturgical artists and how does a congregation find them?

The consensus among religious artists is that while brochures, Web sites, and advertising may reinforce one's standing as a professional, nothing compares to the recommendation by a former client in making a connection with a potential client. In a larger context, this can include publicity for work commissioned by a high-profile client or institution. Textile artist Paul Woodrum of Challwood Studio in New York acknowledges that the vestments he created for the first woman to be installed as bishop in the Anglican Communion, the Right Reverend Barbara Harris, was a great jump start for the business that he and partner Victor Challenor had founded just a few years earlier. Likewise, Connecticut-based artist Marek Czarnecki received many national inquiries and commissions after allowing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to use one of his icons as the promotional image of the "Year for Priests." Such commissions offer publicity to the artist and an imprimatur to the buyer in this niche market.

In addition to articles, and their consultants' rolodexes, clergy and committees generally look to other religious buildings for examples of good work and references for artists. Calls and visits are made to nearby churches and temples, and committee members will find themselves looking more critically at worship facilities they visit while on vacation or business trips. Denominational and local ecumenical resources can include databases of artisans and exhibit opportunities for them at clergy gatherings.

After reviewing images and references, one or more artists are contacted about the potential project and are invited to meet with the committee to show a portfolio and to discuss the possibilities for a commission. While an artist must show a level of competence and an appropriate style, it is impossible to show the final product the client is seeking. Thus, offering one's talent and skill for hire requires



as much silence as speaking. Paul Woodrum notes that Challwood Studio's approach is "first, to listen to the client. How do they see their church's ministry? What is their background and tradition? Where has their faith brought them? What are the boundaries

imposed by ecclesiastical tradition, liturgical season, or occasion?" The answers provide clarity to both practitioner and patron as to whether this collaboration would be a happy and productive one.



At some point, the committee must choose one artist or one studio for the project. This decision is based on an assessment of artistic factors including medium, style, vision, and ability; practical concerns regarding references, cost, schedule availability are weighed; and personality plays a role as in any hire. Meanwhile, the same considerations are being weighed by the artist: Can I work with the setting? Do they want what I offer? Can I interpret their vision? Will they pay on time? Will they pay enough? Is their deadline realistic? How many committee meetings will they expect me to attend? Will they try to micromanage the project or give me some artistic license?

It is a leap of faith for both parties as they begin the hands-on process of creating a unique work of art. Fr. John Valencheck, a Catholic priest who has commissioned a number of paintings for his parish in Cleveland, notes that "there is a certain amount of risk commissioning an original piece of art. You might be able to return a mass-produced statue or chalice, not so something that took months of a man's life to produce to your specifications." He offers some practical advice while in pursuit of the precious: "It is important to know your budget right up front. Have a size and timeline, and basic theme in mind." He also encourages the patron to give clear guidelines regarding important attributes and elements of the work, and the artist to submit preliminary sketches for review. Then, he suggests that the patron step back and trust the artist, cautioning, "if you want a paint-by-numbers painting from your head, don't expect a priceless work of art."

Indeed, if the average worshipers could create their own works of art, they would. Unfortunately, some try and the result is the equivalent of felt banners in various media. For those committees with the wisdom and faith to trust their vision to skilled professionals, they must balance risk with benefits. Of course, commissioning the small scale or seasonal is less risky than the monumental or site specific. Trendy vestments and metal-ware that have seen their day can be moth-balled in the far corner of the sacristy closet with little notice, freestanding statues can be moved to other locations, but life-size mosaics or stained glass windows will either be enjoyed or endured by generations of worshipers. The larger or more permanent the piece, the more confident both patron and artist must be in its planning and execution.

Some forms of religious art are more regimented than others. Iconographer Czarnecki likens the parameters of his orthodox art form to playing classical music, and finds relief in the lack of originality, allowing him to carry on a tradition and concentrate on perfecting his craft. At the other end of the spectrum my husband, Irish artist Ronald Neill Dixon, will sometimes challenge a committee, if only in an effort to avoid repeating himself after decades of designing. Amidst a commission for 24 scenic stained glass windows of the life of Christ, his composition for the Ascension window created much consternation with its awe-struck angel and deep red tones (see page 14). "If you don't like it, I'll take it out and make a new window any way you like," he promised. Post-installation, the consternation turned to compliments, including one from a priest and former art professor who appreciated the fresh take and said he could "hear the power of that moment in the window."

Projects calling for extensive site work require more planning and coordination than simple deliveries. Harout Bastajian, designer and decorative painter at Light Establishment, a Lebanon-based firm with significant international installations, notes that "I realized that the time needed to execute a mosque dome will almost always be the same amount of time to study the spirit, design, ornamentation, and colors of a dome." Although there is no figurative work involved, the sheer size (up to 2,500 square meters covering four to six domes in one mosque) and the intricacy of measuring, stenciling, painting, and gilding will average two months or more of site work with eight to ten artisans working ten hours a day, six days a week. In this or any medium, it is always easier and cheaper to erase on the drawing board than it is to correct during fabrication or installation; thus, the investment in sketching, planning, communicating, reviewing, and revising is a prudent one.

#### TIME AND MONEY


Once the process has been entrusted to the artist for fabrication, the committee members become anxious about the schedule. "How long will it take to make?" they always ask. "Not as long as it took you to decide" is the imagined response of many a meeting-weary artist. Photos, progress reports, online updates, even an occasional visit to the studio can alleviate some apprehension. But the visual arts are not performance art and the committee should trust themselves to have chosen well, and in turn to trust their artist to execute their vision.

Both client and creator need to be realistic about cost and payments. The commodity here is originality, uniqueness; there is no amortization of costs incurred in the design process, nor does it make sense to design a one-of-a-kind piece and execute it in cheap materials. Although artists cannot be expected to bid against mass production, they should be able to justify the cost and the value of their creations, and they should offer a written contract or purchase order which notes schedule, a fixed cost, and progressive payments due at measurable intervals such as purchase of materials, completion of shop drawings, completion of fabrication, and installation.

The religious artist's business plan consists of original designs crafted of the finest materials and sold to a charity. While this may seem unrealistic, careers and firms have been sustained on this model—and on a belief in miracles. Just as counter intuitive and effective, is the fact that spending on the exquisite can create a surplus to fund the commonplace. Indeed, individuals who would ignore a generic capital campaign can be motivated to give to beautiful efforts whether communal or memorial opportunities. Thus, sponsorship of artwork is often offered over cost to congregants who will cheerfully underwrite building and maintenance costs along with creating an inspiring worship environment.

#### THE MASTER PLAN

"Maybe we should not be in such a rush to have our churches finished," says Fr. John Valencheck, who laments the practice of so-called art being purchased out of catalogues, in order to minimize the time and cost involved and to have everything in place on dedication day. Although it is beyond the means of many religious communities to commission original art and furnishings while also constructing a building, a long-term wish list is a wise if cheap investment. Thus, as funds become available, through church growth or individual gifts and legacies, they can be spent on various elements that will layer over time to complete a unified vision.

Each artistic commission is a new journey from an abstract idea to a tangible creation. Some journeys take longer than others, some are to exotic destinations while others will stay in familiar territory. As every successful journey allows us to see the world and ourselves from a different perspective, so too an excursion into the arts can offer fresh insight to one's faith. 



*"From a distance, looking in, I thought I could take my time, explore. Slowly I began to find my way in. I found I liked it. I belonged! I want to learn more, and I'm still here."*

*~Ira Dankberg*

*"I hope that what we can bring to it is simply a starting point."*

*~Marc Schoeplein*

*"I can remember the first time I came to BCC; I sat in my car just outside the door wondering if I could garner enough courage to actually enter."*

*~Bruce Maxwell*

*Exterior of the new Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles.*

# The StoryLines Project

Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles was founded in 1972 as the world's first synagogue for gay and lesbian Jews. Embraced from the start by the Union for Reform Judaism (at that time called the Union of American Hebrew Congregations), BCC has been a pioneering community for more than 40 years, creating the first prayer book to embrace degenderized language for God, introducing egalitarian worship services with lay service leaders, and creating life cycle rituals for lesbian and gay individuals and couples.

To reflect the unique history of the congregation as they moved to a new home, my

*"I had been to temples from New Orleans to Iraq. I was 10 years into a journey, a search for home. With a hello and an introduction my pessimism turned to optimism."* *~Nathan Looney*

*"I stood on the sidelines but was soon pulled into the swirling vortex of the dancing congregation and the Torah."*

*~Michael Berlin*

partner Marc Schoeplein and I envisioned a bimah wall (the decorative wall behind the pulpit which also contains the ark, which holds the torah) that involved the entire community, physically and spiritually, working together to create a centerpiece for the new sanctuary. What emerged became known as the StoryLines project.

At a series of community workshops led by professional writers of BCC, congregants were invited to share their individual stories, and to create written accounts of what BCC has meant in their own lives. Each participant was then given a copper strip on which they etched an approximately 18-letter (a lucky number in Judaism) excerpt from the longer story



*StoryLines etched on copper adorn the bimah wall around the ark.*

*"My prayers, light, flow out of my heart, my soul, dancing into the infinite waves, becoming laughter ..."* *~Marie Pedersen*

THE AUTHOR IS A PRINCIPAL, WITH ARCHITECT MARC SCHOEPLIN, AIA, OF LEWIS/ SCHOEPLIN ARCHITECTS, BASED IN LOS ANGELES.




*Overview of the sanctuary, with the bimah wall as an armature for the StoryLines.*



containing memories, wishes, or thoughts for the future. The bimah wall design is a pair of glass ark doors, created by artists in the BCC community, set in a wall of wood building blocks. In keeping with the values of the congregation and the desire to build a “green” sanctuary, all the wood used is reclaimed. Wrapping the blocks, and intertwining with the ark (and hence the torah scrolls), are the copper StoryLines. Collected, these copper strips form the StoryLines, which are documented and can be added to over time.

BCC Rabbi Lisa Edwards notes, “From a distance people admire the copper strips shining in sunlight from the skylight above during the day and from the light of spotlights at night. But approach the ark, and people

immediately sense there is more. The word ‘torah’ means ‘teaching.’ The StoryLines Wall adds the ‘teachings’ of our lives to the stories told in the torah scrolls inside the ark. A gift from our architects and from our community, our own hands and hearts add new chapters to the sacred stories of our people.”

Writer and artist Kadin Henningsen, who coordinated the StoryLines project along with Executive Director Felicia Park-Rogers, says that “the criss-crossed copper of StoryLines showcases the multivalent and interconnected lives of Beth Chayim Chadashim’s members while acting as both an oral history of the congregation and a visual extension of torah as the stories move in and out of the ark.” 



*Detail of StoryLines copper strips etched by synagogue congregants.*



*"From a distance, looking in, I thought I could take my time, explore. Slowly I began to find my way in. I found I liked it. I belonged! I want to learn more, and*

*I'm still here."*  
-Ira Dankberg

*"Thank you for holding the space for me as I endeavor to become my most authentic self."*

-ANONYMOUS

*"Judaism is the light, balance, and anchor that guide me. BCC is the home and community that connect it."*

-Yael Gadiele

*"[BCC is] A place where my children can grow up knowing that diversity is normal."*

-KC Wilsey

*"BCC has provided me with a place, a home where all the various parts of me can come together to find friendship, family, love, and community."*

-Mark Miller

*"When I saw the scroll in Los Angeles, when I held it in my arms, it was a continuity. I am happy it found such a wonderful home where there are people who will take care of it."*

-Olga Grilli



# Religious Buildings as Development Drivers

By Michael Foster, FAIA

AS CITIES GROW FASTER, AND URBAN LIVING ACCELERATES at astonishing rates, sacred spaces seem to evaporate. Have needs for sacred space changed? Can society find alternate means of connecting and aspiring? Is the pace of urban development incongruous with achieving appropriate sacred space? Historically there has been a strong correlation between sacred space and patterns of development. From cathedral towns to suburban churches, migratory patterns of settlement have anticipated, led, or informed sacred space. Today, however, many places of worship cannot catch up with changes in demographics before being converted to the latest perceived “highest and best use” based on a development pro-forma or municipal zoning maps.

About 15 years ago, I asked a developer friend who was building a high-rise in Arlington, Virginia, why he didn’t plan retail on the first floor. I just assumed retail was a more valuable economic use for him and would add vibrancy to the street, which was my objective. He was quick to admonish my naïveté and ignorance, while impatiently explaining that too few lenders knew how to underwrite mixed-use buildings, much less how to insure them. He indicated that mixed use was only viable in larger, “more sophisticated” urban markets. Even then, he could only consider mixed use if it could be built without detracting from the economics of the project. Ironically, in the relatively few years since this odd conversation, the markets have changed dramatically, and the majority of urban development in the country near mass transit is indeed mixed use. The mix of uses typically includes some combination of office, residential, retail, or entertainment. Such mixed use has successfully revitalized our cities and reinvigorated urban economic development. But what crucial part of the mix is missing?

The municipal or developer-driven model of mixed use often overlooks the integration of sacred space and its value to cities and communities. Such models, when offered, provide space in what is “left over,” not what is needed for ministry, identity, or true sacred space that is formative in the community. Many churches built during the post-war boom have fraying building fabric and shrinking congregations. They often are forced to sell valuable land and to relocate or to suspend ministries and services. Many churches are leaving the very urban neighborhoods that are in great need of their ministries, or are resorting to a “virtual presence” via podcasts or outreach through Twitter. The opportunities of urban transformation for the design of spiritual and social programs should not be overshadowed by commerce alone or a by lack of vision.

Places of worship that are well established in growing cities often are the products of suburban planning and are challenged with survival. Many are at risk of disappearing, while at the same time they have the unique opportunity to be the catalyst for integrating the sacred into the natural course of development. Mixed-use planning in which the faith



*Exterior of the Clarendon Baptist Church development in suburban Virginia, which considers multiple uses in a single block, anchored by a religious use.*



*Clarendon Baptist Church development ground floor plan.*

community leads with a sense of purpose can result in both dynamic interaction and contemplative solace within the city. The issue is more than just land-use economics; it is also about serving the spiritual and social roles of evolving urban communities.

As an architect and urban planner, working with hundreds of churches and schools over the past few decades, I am used to getting calls from pastors or building committees that start with, “We don’t have any money but we really need your help.” The call is typically

THE AUTHOR IS A PRINCIPAL WITH MTFA ARCHITECTURE, SPECIALIZING IN DESIGN AND STRATEGIC CONSULTING FOR FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES, LITURGICAL SPACES, AND EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS. HE ALSO SERVES ON THE ARLINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, AND IS FORMER CHAIR OF THE ARLINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION IN VIRGINIA.





*Inset: Existing condition of Christ Lutheran Evangelical Church in Bethesda, Maryland.*

*Proposed new mixed-use development for Christ Lutheran on the same site.*

all around it was transformed in response to growth associated with a new subway station located one block away. Notwithstanding a controversial approval process, the development was carefully realized through the full zoning potential of the land. The mixed-use approach supported sacred space that serves diverse styles of worship, education, and ministry, with a mix of much-needed affordable housing funded by tax credit financing, market rate units, and dedicated community involvement. The most notable aspect of the project was the way the congregation took the leadership in the development. Once the congregation and church leadership clarified the mission and understood how its valuable land equity could be used to achieve its calling, it was no longer limited to the confines of its existing structure. Only then did it realize that the sacred space it was called to implement could not be just a left-over consideration in a developer-led process.

This paradigm is neither new nor limited to congregational Baptist churches in Virginia. Christ Lutheran Evangelical Church in Bethesda, Maryland, and St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., among others with which we are currently working, have approved designs and are starting construction for different models of mixed use, creating viable and integrated sacred space to serve their communities. These churches have had a longstanding presence and are well established but have been challenged by changing demographics and new development patterns. Most had been post-war land-use models that are out of context in the new urban landscape. Their inward-looking identities and surface parking lots did not connect with those now living in the community. Challenged with a myriad of issues ranging from the environmental impact of storm water and the heat-island effect of asphalt to the desire to be relevant and inviting, the facilities were struggling as much as the congregations inside. But the similarities ended there; each church design responded to its site's unique mission, land use, and zoning context. Where appropriate, the historic or landmark attributes were respected and incorporated into design solutions that serve their respective current and flexible needs. Finally, the mixed-use synergy was based on carefully selected development partnerships that were able to fulfill the much larger vision of

which we are willing to be held accountable?" This inquiry elicits expressions of values outside of a strict committee agenda, while focusing on mission, purpose, and relevance.

Clarendon Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia, answered honestly the two critical questions we posed. As is the case for most churches, God's vision exponentially exceeded the imagination. The church leadership was concerned about declining membership and the escalating cost of maintaining its building. Designed in the 1950s for a congregation of more than 2,000, it lacked intimacy for the few remaining members who attended regularly. Its budget was well shy of what it would take to repair the roof, much less to make the sanctuary more conducive to worship for an evolving population. What started out as a controversial notion soon grew to a radical consensus within the small but diverse congregation. As the church redefined its mission, it elected to use its valuable land equity to develop affordable housing, a day care center, and new worship space, while preserving the landmark steeple that provided a familiar identity for a new mixed-use catalyst for church in the community.

Since no one had thought this church would ever change, zoning had been overlooked when

associated with some aspect of incremental growth; more often, it regards an aging facility not compatible with changing styles of ministry or worship. We have received this call from churches of dozens of denominations: Protestant, Catholic, nondenominational, and also from synagogues, temples, and those of other faith traditions. Clearly, this is not a unique need. While most require understated, well-designed solutions, occasionally a congregation has such an ambitious mission that it is not aligned with available resources or aging, high-maintenance facilities. This dichotomy has resulted in different ways of looking at stewardship and land use, while preserving a heritage of ministry in a changing world. Exploring the synergy of sacred space intertwined with the patterns of development can achieve an expanded mix of uses beyond worship, education, and commercial development; it can be the outreach to identify faith as relevant in our cities and in our lives.

To ensure accountability of stewardship and mission, we ask two simple questions when embarking on a master plan, new building, or even the smallest renovation: "What is going on here that supports your mission, that must be preserved and restored?" and "What is not going on here that God is calling us to do, to





—Small, square building that was saved and refurbished by the National Community Church in Washington, D.C.

—A small, square building that was saved and refurbished by the National Community Church in Washington, D.C.



reconnecting with their changing community than most capital campaigns could envision.


Another smaller example is The National Community Church in Washington, D.C., which did not have enough land for a nave or an auditorium, so was developed as a coffee shop over a recording studio. The identity of the church has become a beloved community gathering space where music and sermons are recorded live, then broadcast for worship in movie theaters and on podcasts. The design responds to the desire of younger people to integrate worship into their lives in an ongoing virtual church, and to use technology to hear and deliver the message.

Within cities or campuses not only the mix or the scale of uses but the expression of

sacred space is crucial. In the design of Pope John Paul the Great High School, the chapel representing less than half of one percent of the floor area of a large parochial high school became the singular identity for the school and an iconic symbol of worship in the broader community. Each different example of mixed use at macro or micro scales integrates sacred spaces and sacred experiences into the community and the city.

The role and mix of the sacred in the city—in our places of worship, in our schools, and in our lives—are being challenged on all fronts, just as we recall what much of history already reveals: design, beauty, and faith are integral parts of our lives at various and extraordinary levels. Design solutions for sacred space go

hand in hand with the sound planning logic and social justice required for health and sustainability. The changing metrics of development will certainly change the opportunity for sacred space, as it always has, and in many cases will amplify the need for it. The sacred-space-led model provides social, economic, and environmental stewardship of land use first for ministry, followed by healthy mixed-use development partnerships.

Whether a chapel, a school, an impromptu prayer garden, a labyrinth, or a gathering place for fellowship, sacred spaces large and small are vital ingredients in the mix of uses in our cities. These small examples may well help shape the larger urban context in powerful ways. 



# Creating Church: Kenosis as Protocol

By Randall Lindstrom

Church, whether seen as a community, the individual members it comprises, or the materiality that accommodates their activities is fundamentally the synchronicity of making-room and gathering-in,<sup>1</sup> an act of creativity and humility with transformational potential. That ontology offers productive clues in the search for what is needed to “create church.” The scriptural Kenosis Hymn deprecates “grasping,” extols humility, and portrays the making-room in Christ’s kenosis (his “self-emptying”) not as a realization of emptiness, but paradoxically as the gathering-in of everything needed for fulfillment. Subsequent theology strengthens the link between kenosis and creativity, seen first in the Incarnation, as a “self-contraction” of the Creator to create itself in human form,<sup>2</sup> and second—via Kabbalistic reflections—in the Creation, as the primeval event of divine “self-withdrawal,” making-room to gather-in a cosmos that includes humanity.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the confluence of kenosis, incarnation, and creation reveals the spirit, as “the power of the process of begetting,”<sup>4</sup> the matrix in an ultimate relational union that makes-room for humanity, as “created co-creators,” to gather-in and respond with reciprocal self-emptying.<sup>5</sup> Implied is a special responsibility for *all* humanity to enhance the aesthetics of life and habitat, with kenosis as an enabler of creativity.

Such is the wisdom not found in so-called “creative industries,” where the concept of creativity is co-opted and presented as something to be known and commodified as a process. Architecture is not immune to this kind of thinking, attracted to manifold processes, which, even when labelled “participative” can mask tokenism, manipulative techniques, and entrenched hierarchies. Creativity is neither a process nor a privilege, but a contingent happening to be experienced by *all* who are involved in a creative project. Participants cannot control the happening, but can be prepared for the experience, and actively engage it. Kenosis promotes preparedness and engagement, even as it challenges conventional definitions of “design” and “designers,” and calls

“...Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself (*ekenosen*), taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him...”

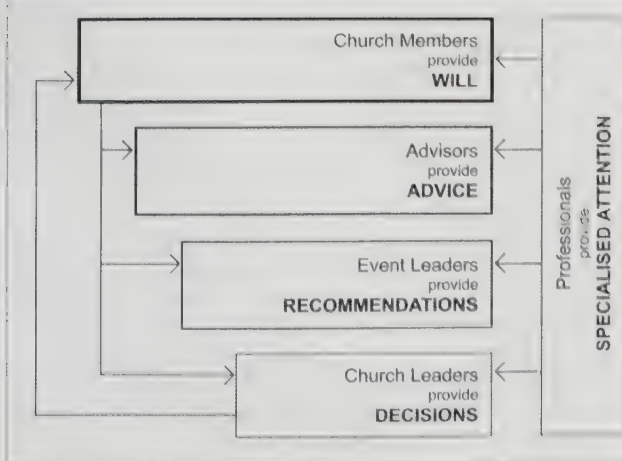
*From the ‘Kenosis Hymn’, in*

*St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians 2:5-11 (RSV)*

for eschewing control and embracing vulnerability. It asks all intent on “creating church” to focus less on a process for designing, and more on a way of *being*. Kenosis offers a protocol, more than a process, particularly powerful in creating church.

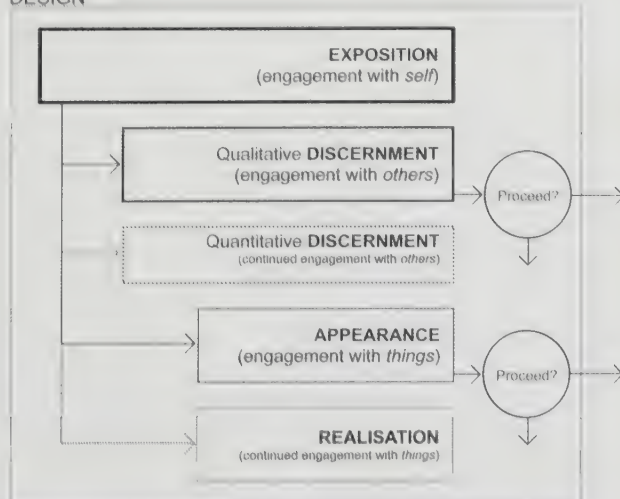
Today, the task of creating a church (or a synagogue, a mosque, a temple, or another religious building) is seldom the exclusive purview of clergy and architect. A kenotic protocol can inform and become real in the undertaking of that task, allowing the whole church to refine its life and habitat. Kenosis may take many different forms, because what is often labelled “process” is actually the unfolding of a *contingent* creative event. It is when attempts are made to control the event that it can become harnessed with “process” and distorted, leading to illusions of precise instructions and “correct” outcomes. This article includes some broad sketches of the manner in which I have come to implement a kenotic protocol (used in the design of St. John the Baptist Catholic

## DESIGNERS



*All are ‘designers,’ and all have interdependent roles and responsibilities in the creative event.*

## DESIGN

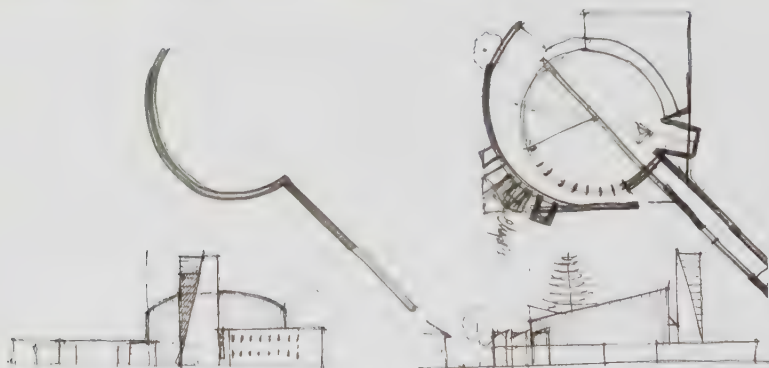


*The engagements comprising design commence sequentially, but remain on-going, even as successive engagements are underway.*

THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN A PRACTITIONER AND A CONSULTANT IN ARCHITECTURE AND LITURGICAL DESIGN FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, AND HAS ENGAGED IN DESIGN, TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND WRITING IN THE US, EUROPE, ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA, WITH NUMEROUS PROJECTS, BOTH SACRED AND SECULAR, RECEIVING PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION AND AWARDS.



Two of the concepts put forth by the congregation of St. John the Baptist Church make a strong distinction between the liturgical and devotional aspects of church life. That distinction becomes an important generator of appearance, suggesting an equally strong distinction in the hierarchical, functional, and formal aspects of the church, wherein devotion supports liturgy, but the two are interdependent.



“... making-room prepares for things the possibility to belong to their relevant whither and, out of this, to each other.”

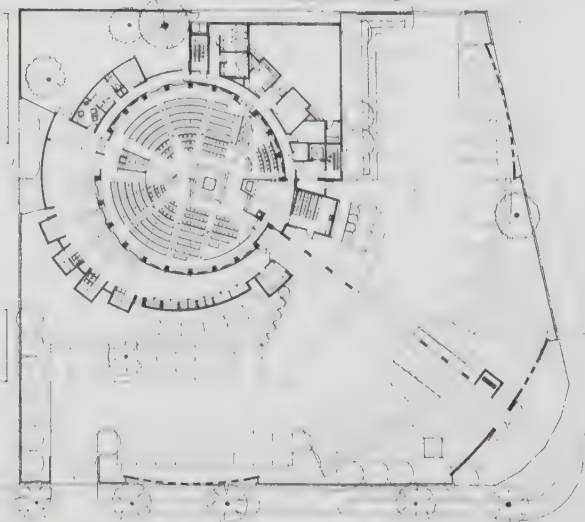
Martin Heidegger, “Art and Space”

Church, shown here) but they are indicative and largely indeterminate, describing only one way in which the protocol might become manifest.<sup>6</sup> Criticisms are rife —some unreasonable, others meritorious—concerning church design processes in which participants feel manipulated. My interest in a kenotic protocol is in its capacity to mitigate the circumstances from which such criticisms arise. Ironically, that capacity derives not from architectural or process theory, but from the church itself.

#### PLAYS WITHIN A PLAY OF MULTIPLE ENGAGEMENTS

Experience suggests that kenotic protocol is a creative event more accurately described as plays within a play. The overarching play, *Design*, encompasses four internal plays, commenced sequentially, but

#### Ground Floor Plan



thereafter acted out concurrently and interdependently. The internal plays are: *Exposition*, *Discernment*, *Appearance*, and *Realization* (this article considers only the first three, which lead to realization). Each play involves intense engagement amongst player-participants, which in turn requires “releasement,” an aspect of kenotic self-emptying that grants “a heightened sensitivity to what is called for by the entire situation.”<sup>7</sup> But, because kenosis includes plerosis, each engagement offers the *fulfilment* of heightened acuity and increased potentiality. Thus, kenotic protocol prepares the way for attentive making-room and gathering-in, involving all aspects of church: individuals (self), community (others), and materiality (things), as well as transient professional attendants.

A church with hundreds or thousands of emotionally connected “owners” can appear as a centipede-like client. Mediating the apparent challenge, a kenotic protocol promotes creative participation without chaos, and practical administration without manipulation. It is simultaneously bounded, open, and expectant of emergent happenings. Bounded by a plea for self-restriction and a commitment to self-identity, openness to the other is revealed, and that openness calls forth emergent opportunities for change, not only to the church’s building, but also to its people. Congregational homogenization, however, is not the goal; the church’s strength lies in its heterogeneity.<sup>8</sup> Vital among diverse participants are those who may be seen as “negative,” but in whom transformation often becomes most manifest. In creating church, a kenotic protocol—an etiquette for engagement in creative pursuit—might include the following:

- A proposal to explore the potentialities for change, without the presumption of an arising project or other outcome;
- An invitation to the entire congregation to participate as “designers” of their future, understanding that all contribute to the collective will, even when withholding individual will;
- Recognition of all participants as servant advisors, charged to be attentive to the creative event in order to offer the church their considered advice;
- Recognition of select/elect participants as servant event leaders, charged to be attentive to the event, the advice, and other situational factors in order to make considered recommendations to church leadership;
- Recognition of servant church leaders, charged to be attentive to the event, the advice, the recommendations, and the entire situation in order to make considered decisions;



- Commissioning of servant professional attendants, invited to be co-participants and charged to exercise specialised training in order to assist in enabling the creative event;
- Affirmation of all participants' volitional, vulnerable, and inter-dependent engagement of the event and one another

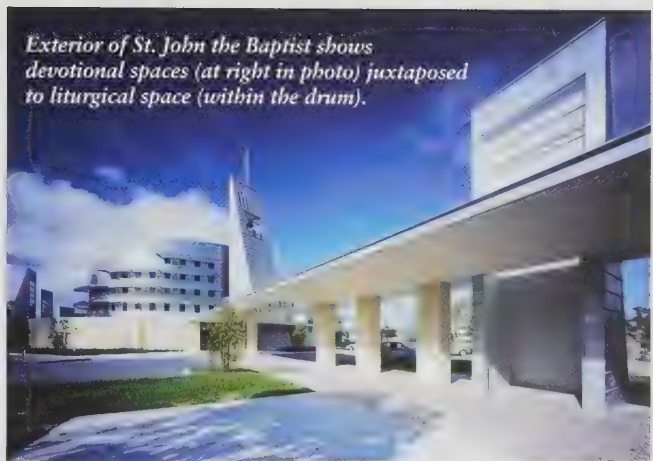
#### ENGAGEMENT WITH SELF-EXPOSITION

The central idea of kenosis is "self-emptying," or making-room in the self for the gathering-in of that which is emergent. It is an engagement that asks: What do I think I already know, and to what extent am I prepared to empty and be filled, to be attentive to additional information, alternative interpretations, and the inevitable challenges arising from both? The participants' willingness to engage that question is an important gesture of kenosis, usually indicating at least a tentative interest in the "becoming" of self. In the context of creating church, such becoming is to be open and attentive to the church's situation. Hence, exposition of information about church can serve to enable the engagement, provided that such information is meritorious, and offered kenotically, not to indoctrinate, nor to promote preconceived agendas. That approach is made evident if all participants are offered the same information, by the same credentialed presenters, and in the same contexts, addressing, for example: (1) Christian symbology; (2) authoritative documents that require, recommend, or influence material responses in church design; and (3) a survey of the material potentialities presented by symbology and liturgy. There is no suggestion that everyone will agree with or reach similar interpretations of the information, nor that such accord is desirable. The information is offered *en masse*, but its receipt and processing—making-room and gathering-in—is an individual act. In it, the creative event begins to unfold, even as another parallel engagement begins.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHERS – DISCERNMENT

Although the commonly held experience of self-engagement finds participants *in relation*, it is by extending the engagement and opening up to "the other" that participants come *into relationship*. Discernment of the entire situation relies on that engagement in order to avoid an outcome limited to personal knowledge and taste. Engaged with the other, the bounds of individual opinion—perhaps being transformed by the engagement with self—create a realm of openness in which collective wisdom can emerge. Calling for self-emptying while preserving self-identity, kenosis seeks not to change or disregard individual opinion, but to reveal the potential merits of its abeyance when matters of collective effect are being discerned. It proposes the possibility that one might not reach a particular conclusion if one were left to his or her opinions but, having shared one's thoughts and having listened to others, one can see that this is the vision of the group to which one belongs. Because one supports the group, one can support its collective wisdom.

The matters in question need to be those that only the group can discern, those qualitative attributes about which design professionals can only ever speculate, and not infrequently err. Rather than attempt to discern the attributes of their church as materiality, participants are better positioned to discern the attributes and aspirations of their church as community. Discernment, in the context of kenosis, is a time for sharing, not convincing or debating. Value lies in attunement to the diverse, sometimes conflicting thoughts of the other, prompting a realization that each participant *is* the other.<sup>9</sup> Value also lies in attunement to memory, since, arguably, in no other building type except the private home is memory more strongly linked to place.<sup>10</sup> But memory is not only nostalgic, it is contemporary and expectant, embedded with yearnings for a church no longer extant, perceptions of a church as it currently appears,



*Exterior of St. John the Baptist shows devotional spaces (at right in photo) juxtaposed to liturgical space (within the drum).*

and prefigurations of a church to come. Discernment is grounded in memory, shaping the imaginings and thereby the design of the participants' aspirational place of church. The product of this engagement with the other might, for example, result in a published documentation of the church's aspirational concepts.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of product format, the engagement sees a continued unfolding of the creative event, with the articulation of collective advice providing bounds; the abstraction of a qualitative program creating the openness in which something can happen; and the anticipation reflected in criteria by which emergent happenings can be assessed.

#### ENGAGEMENT WITH THINGS – APPEARANCE

Emergent design advances with each on-going engagement. As a result, design does not merely respond to a program or sequentially follow it, as in traditional design processes. It already exists, created by those who best know the needed outcome, and is embedded in their aspirational concepts. Hence, the role of the professional designer is to "free the design" in a role of servitude. Such hierarchical inversion may be uncomfortable to those accustomed to seeing designers at the top of the project pyramid, but the role of the designer in kenotic posture is not trivialised, only moderated, and paradoxically strengthened as a consequence. Kenosis is the self-restriction that affects the heightening of attentiveness-to-situation, on the part of *all* participants, not least attendant professionals. Specialised training in aesthetics and manufacture can amplify attunement, if not used as a means of grasping at control, power, or fame. Such attunement is acutely needed to further the emergence of design and requires yet another parallel engagement, with "things."

A kenotic protocol invites the professional designer to make that engagement with demonstrative vulnerability and servitude, amid the things of church—an incarnation of the design studio on-site, *en charrette*, for several days—where, free of the distractions of office, telephone, and computer, heightened attentiveness can be directed to the entire situation of the church: its environs, site, existing building(s), furnishings, art, and the spaces between these things. The basis of the engagement lies in the aspirational concepts of the church, used to interrogate the things concerning their "desire" and capacity to embrace those concepts, while being alert to correspondences, and eschewing any shift to the latent desires of the designers. If a persistent and open conversation is held, release sees the church's word pictures transformed; not re-imagined, but graphically re-imagined. Church participants maintain their presence in the creative event by reviewing the on-going emergence of their design. Critical is the framing of the assessment question. Often on such occasions—especially absent





Interior of the sanctuary.

a kenotic protocol—the question reduces to some form of: *Do you like this design?* That question encourages participants to revert to personal opinion. More apropos would be: *Is this proposal faithful to our aspirational concepts?* Answering that question requires that individual assessment be based on the collective wisdom of the church, formed by their own kenotic and creative engagements. If design proposals are convincingly traceable to aspirational concepts, they are met as a reacquaintance with the participants' collective imaginings, familiarized by the engagements with self, others, and things.

#### THE PLACE OF CHURCH

It might be argued that kenotic engagements are phenomenological or mystical, as if to dismiss their practicability. I would respond

that the mystical and phenomenological are neither foreign nor incongruous to matters of religion and church. More important, I would suggest that kenotic protocol does not ask participants to become mystics as much as monks.<sup>12</sup> There is a critical difference. By definition, mystics stand apart, by virtue of some unique characteristic that can be employed to spiritual end. Monks are drawn together, usually "ordinary" people who have made an extraordinary commitment to engage self, others and things, in a practical manner. Theirs is a lifetime commitment to kenosis: counterintuitive and often countercultural.

Embracing kenosis as a protocol for creating church is similarly demanding, but provisionally so. Kenotic protocol suggests that the ordinary people of church—laity and clergy—can come together in a commitment

to imagine and design their church; and that design professionals (also ordinary people) can, in a kenotic co-commitment, assist in imaging the church's design imaginings as form, space, and materiality. Kenotic protocol offers a matrix of empathy and effectiveness, capable of transforming all aspects of church. The church is a *place* of memory. The church building, then, is the placed materiality of that memory,<sup>13</sup> making-room and gathering-in the self, the others, and the things, from which church emerges. To design such a place is to engage in the mutuality and interdependence of kenotic exchange, to engage in the creative event. In its call for intense attentiveness to the entire situation, kenosis is a call to create place, not least the place of church. 卐

1. The philosophical basis of this notion is found in M. Heidegger, "Art and Space," *Man and World* 6, no. 1 (1973): 3-8.
2. A. Hunt, "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1998): 203-4.
3. For a broad outline of the development of kenotic theology, see: J. Haught, "Kenosis," in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J.W.V. van Huyssteen (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 500-02.
4. A. Hunt, "With the Risen Lord: Francois-Xavier Durrwell CSSR (1912-2005): A Tribute," *Australian eJournal of Theology*, no. 7 (2006), [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/37047/20061019-0000/dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt\\_7/hunt.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/37047/20061019-0000/dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_7/hunt.html).
5. M.G. Doncel, "The Kenosis of the Creator, His Creative Call and the Created Co-Creators," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 2, no. 4 (2006): 5-7.
6. I have implemented evolving forms of a kenotic protocol for nearly twenty years, and in connection with both secular and sacred projects, the latter category comprising more than 100 clients -- Protestant, Catholic, ecumenical and interfaith -- on four continents. Projects have included cathedrals, churches, monasteries, convents, chapels for primary, secondary and tertiary education, and multi-faith sacred spaces at various institutions. Although I have augmented and refined the protocol -- from something more akin to "process" -- I do not claim to be its originating or sole contributing author. Antecedents can be found in well-known techniques

- of group dynamics, employed earlier, in varying forms, by liturgical consultants including Rev. Dr. Richard Vosko, Christine Reinhard, Marchita Mauck, and John Buscemi. Each merits credit for the pioneering efforts that saw such techniques adapted for ecclesiastical settings. My efforts -- in dual roles, as liturgical design consultant and architect -- have been to transform process into protocol, and amplify its theological and philosophical grounding. During initial implementation for Australian clients (1997-99), those efforts benefitted from the insights of Jill O'Brien SGS and, thereafter, from the sustained participation of liturgists Dr. Margaret Smith SGS, Rev. Dr. Patrick Negri SSS, Rev. Thomas Knowles SSS, Ursula O'Rourke SGS, Rev. Dr. David Orr OSB, Dr. Carmel Pilcher RSJ, and architectural colleague Jason Williams, all of whom have valuably served as presenters. The protocol continues to evolve, garner interest, and generate requests for implementation.
7. "Releasement" is used, here, with reference to the Heideggerian discussion of "Gelassenheit," and the later work of Charles Guignon, as explored and developed in: J. Malpas, "From Extremity to Releasement: Place, Authenticity, and the Self," in *The Horizons of Authenticity: Essays in Honor of Charles Guignon's Work on Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Moral Psychology*, ed. H. Pedersen and L. Hatab (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming 2013).
  8. John Paul II, "Novo Millennio Ineunte," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* XCIII (2001). Here, the pope recognises such strength: "The unity of the church is not uniformity, but

- the organic blending of legitimate diversities."
9. The nature of a kenotic protocol mediates conflict and promotes resolution from its inception. Instances of controversy and contention can arise, but in my experience are exceptional. In extreme cases, I have witnessed participants -- so convinced of individual opinion over all else -- come to the realization that they could no longer be a part of a group that seems to be moving in an opposed and unacceptable direction. Despite the unfortunateness of severance, such action is valid resolution, and true to the contingency of a creative event.
  10. For a more extensive philosophical exploration of place and memory, see: J. Malpas, "Building Memory," *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 13 (2012): 11-21.
  11. In the case of a completely new church, additional discernment is usually required to extrapolate quantitative needs from the already-formed qualitative aspirations. Here, I emphasise the qualitative, because it is that aspect of creating church that is most susceptible to inattention or omission.
  12. The term "monk" is used with reference to both genders, according to its Greek origins.
  13. J. Malpas, "Putting Space in Place: Philosophical Topography and Relational Geography," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(2012): 236. Although Malpas discusses concepts of space and place in connection with geography, those concepts are readily transposed to architecture, and invite this correspondence with kenosis.



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# PLANNING

THE LEXICON OF PLANNING AHEAD

**B**EYOND DEATH (AND TAXES) THERE ARE ABUNDANT GOOD REASONS TO PLAN. Yet, we human beings are not naturally predisposed to planning. The economic benefits of planning ahead ought to be sufficient; however, coupled with staving off many emergencies, avoiding overwhelming operations costs, and being forced to make decisions based on the demands of short-term needs, there are myriad incentives to plan ahead. It's funny how often it is that we don't have enough money to do it right, but we have enough money to do it twice. Planning allows us to look at the big picture, serves as a road map, and facilitates "right-sizing" projects and their components.

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**"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."**

—Benjamin Franklin

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Planning tools help us fix problems before they get worse, identify problems before they're apparent, and—most beneficial—avoid problems before they take form. Generally, planning helps to properly allocate resources. These may relate to concerns that are financial, logistical, operational, technical or aesthetic. Planning forces us to focus, to reflect, and to arrive at a consensus of goals, needs, and the methods of attaining them, thereby developing projects that address issues at hand; planning saves us from becoming overzealous, responding to knee-jerk reactions, or focusing on the symptoms and not the cause.

Owners, stewards, architects, engineers, and property managers are faced with many types of plans and approaches that set goals, evaluate options, and establish a course of action. Yet, these should be seen as a set of facility management tools, each designed to address a specific objective while incorporating a unique approach. For the professionals regularly engaged in developing plans, the lexicon is clear; however, the array and terminology can quickly become confusing to the casual user. It is important to know the general goals of each plan and the distinctions (often nuanced) among their approach and intended outcome. Here are some commonly used planning documents that should become part of your active vocabulary: master plan, strategic plan, feasibility study, optimization plan, maintenance plan, and green action plan.

**Master plans** encompass physical building programs and related regulatory issues. Generally, they incorporate an assessment of governing codes, conditions, programming, spatial allocation, and use, leading to concepts and recommendations for design, restoration, reuse, and optimization, along with budgets and timelines.

**Strategic plans** focus on specific operational and logistical concerns associated with a physical design and construction project. Generally, they define and clarify long- and short-term facility needs


with an eye toward maintaining some semblance of normalcy and financial stability (e.g., cash flow analysis) throughout construction.

**Feasibility studies** analyze a proposed project to determine whether it is technically, programmatically, and financially viable. Generally, a feasibility study includes a digest of the organizational goals compared with site/building potential; a summary of reasonable alternatives with associated costs; known or predictable impediments, incentives, and opportunities.

**Optimization plans** provide an overview of a facility and its management via life cycle analysis. Often the goal is to reduce operations costs while increasing energy efficiency and long-term performance. A critical component of these plans is "benchmarking," which creates a site-specific standard by which future initiatives may be measured and monitored. Optimization plans are multimodal and proactive, and may be initiated at virtually any point in a building's life, from conceptual design through construction and management. Energy audits are a familiar subcomponent of such plans; to be put into perspective, they require the context of the larger plan.

**Maintenance plans** specify the schedule, type, and frequency of implementing cyclical maintenance of repairs to prolong performance life, enhance self-preservation qualities, and protect building-related investment. When undertaken on a planned and regular basis, maintenance can reduce or prevent building failure and repair/restoration costs. Such plans also signal important testing and inspection protocols, regulatory compliance, and permit renewals, as well as easing day-to-day operations for facility managers by highlighting qualified outsource services, suppliers, and contractors.

**Green action plans** identify short- and long-term goals for sustainability, focusing on both individual actions and contributions toward larger community-based aspirations. These plans are relatively new and are still in their formative stage, though they are much like master plans in that they are governed by global thinking, with an eye toward combining the symbiotic benefits of social/cultural equity, environment, economy, and education, along with core issues relating to building and operational performance.

All of these plans emphasize holistic approaches designed to keep us from basing our critical decisions on myopic, short-term, or limited frames of reference. Plans instill confidence that a program has been clearly analyzed and mapped and that it has the requisite critical buy-in by its constituency. As such, developing an appropriate plan at the genesis of setting goals can increase fundraising and the likelihood of success. In other words, don't wait for the flood to begin building your ark. 

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# HOW I CARVED MY INNER BUDDHA

THE LAST WORD \* ANGELA GUNN

AT GAS STATIONS, ON ROUNDABOUTS, AND IN FRONT OF THE BALINESE CITY OF KUTA'S BEACH HOTELS, black and white checkered cloth adorned everything in sight; I was mesmerized. Gray statues glared back. Their faces were frozen, smiling ferociously, daring me to awaken to a truth I had always known but could not yet fathom.

These statues appeared to come to life on Christmas Day as my family and I watched Balinese dancers sway to hypnotic gamelan music. Later, when we got caught in a royal funeral procession on the streets of Ubud, we bolted away from a looming, giant, wooden bull. Under the oppressive weight of this three-story, coffin-laden sculpture, the funeral procession and onlookers constantly shifted like waves rushing onto the shore. The threat of injury, even death, was imminent and I began to comprehend the Republic of Indonesia's motto, "Bhinneka Tuggal Ika," translated by some as "Despite differences there is oneness."

Although Hinduism is prevalent in the art and culture of Bali, I left the island with a souvenir found on every market stall: a statue of the bald and rotund, laughing Budai, which best represented to me the awe and wonder I had experienced in Bali and wanted to sustain forever.

My Budai statue traveled the world with me for years afterwards. No matter where we ended up, I would often spend hours rubbing the Budai's sandstone belly in the hopes of regaining a glimmer of that same happiness.


Ten years later, I had written and directed my first short film in New York, the final step I needed to graduate with an MFA in Film and Television. I should have been on top of the world, but my life was stuck in unhappy limbo. Even while surrounded by the art and film I

believed to be the key to my happiness, it wasn't until I was forced, in order to graduate, to take an online class called World Religions, that life began to fall into place.

Buddhism was simply a passing thought in my course book, a banality on the otherwise fascinating pages. Yet, in my class research, I discovered podcasts by Insight Meditation teacher Gil Fronsdal; no matter which Zencast I listened to, Gil's lessons always helped clarify my problems.

I began to understand that the basis of my suffering lay in my relationship to my thoughts. This led me to write my first published article for the Tiny Buddha Web site. As one of the Web site's most popular blog posts of 2010, I took my success and I began a daily blog based on my spiritual practice.

Still, I continued to rub the Budai's belly, seeking ever-elusive happiness, until the day my Balinese Budai had his head smashed in by a tiled floor. A chord in me was struck that hadn't played since my trip to Bali, and after a year of writing daily about my spiritual practice, I saw the Budai as the impermanent sandstone statue it was.

Now a new Balinese sandstone Buddha sits in peaceful meditation by my bedside. It reminds me of what the Budai failed to teach me for all those years: even if I never do smile like my Balinese Budai, inner peace is the best gift I can learn to carve within myself, and my happiness is a choice I have to make in every moment. 

THE AUTHOR IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA. MORE OF HER WRITING CAN BE FOUND AT [ANGEGUNN.COM](http://ANGEGUNN.COM).

## The Betty Meyer Memorial Fund



On the first anniversary of her passing, the Board of Directors of Faith & Form has instituted a fund in memory of Betty Meyer, Hon. AIA, who served as editor of Faith & Form for many years and encouraged excellence in religious architecture and art. The purpose of the fund is to support the on-going publication of Faith & Form, to help sustain the journal that Betty loved and dedicated herself to.

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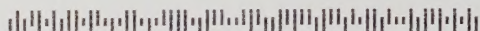
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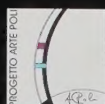


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Today, it is the leading Italian liturgical atelier with recognized leadership in civil and ecclesiastical design and fabrication. Comprised of more than 60 artists and skilled craftsman, they possess the capability and versatility to move between different materials to accomplish one unified design.

Whether working directly with a client, liturgical consultant or architect, Progetto Arte Poli is adaptable and can provide a variety of services and products making them the perfect fit for almost any project.



Basilica of St. Paul outside-the-Walls, Rome  
Glass windows



Pope Benedetto XVI and Albano Poli

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906 Jean St. ste 103  
Grapevine, TX 76051  
972-539-0406, fax 972-355-1952  
info@thebethanygroup.com - www.thebethanygroup.com

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